

Opening the Glass Door

by Sarah G. Portales

The library to me is like looking through a glass door (like the one at the entrance to King Library). I can see through to the other side and I have to open the door and walk through it. Getting there is exciting, powerful, and educational. I've just barely opened the glass door, with my tutor Lise's help, and I am trying to walk through it—the beginning of a wonderful journey.

It's ironic that about 38 years ago I was a student at Silver Creek High in line for my first working permit, waiting to be assigned my first job. I was placed at a day care center. One of my responsibilities was taking a group of children from the day-care center to the library—the Carnegie Branch Library at Santa Clara and 23rd Street, one of the first libraries in San José, which is now an historical landmark.

I remember walking to the big white square building, which seemed huge at that time, but looking at it now it is tiny compared to our Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library of today!

The children and I would walk down stairs to a teacher sitting on a small stool in the middle of the room. We would sit in a circle on the floor and listen

to story time. I just loved to hear all the stories. I was mesmerized. I think I enjoyed story time more than the children! I don't remember ever having story time at home when I was growing up because my father always worked two jobs and my mother was sick.

As a mother I made sure my son, David, was enrolled in the library's summer reading program. He was encouraged to read a lot of books so he could get the exciting prizes at the end. Now, at 15½, he likes to read and he reads better than I do, thanks to the reading programs.

I have been an advocate and supporter of my working crew also, encouraging them to enroll in the PAR program. I am very proud that they have all improved in English, reading, and writing skills.

Now I am enrolled in the PAR program, looking through the glass, opening the door, and trying to walk through to the other side.

